



# Heavy Vehicles Policy

May 2020

# RACT Policy – Heavy Vehicles

## Mobility Strategy Pillar: Road Safety

Road safety is the first component of RACT's mobility strategy. Within this pillar, RACT's vision is to:

- Increasingly improve Tasmanian roads so that they are safer.

## Heavy vehicles policy statements

### Heavy vehicles explained

- According to Heavy Vehicle National Law, a heavy vehicle must have a gross vehicle mass (GVM) or aggregate trailer mass of more than 4.5 tonnes. The GVM is the most it can weigh when fully loaded.
- This includes a range of vehicles, including semi-trailers, B-double and A-double freight trucks, road trains, passenger buses, vehicle carriers, livestock and other agricultural vehicles as well as mobile cranes and other special purpose vehicles.

### Purpose of this policy

- As Tasmania's peak motoring body, RACT is an advocate for improvements to road safety, including heavy transport.
- This policy will discuss RACT's position around heavy transport routes, impacts to the road network, heavy vehicle standards, rules and compliance, licence assessments and education.
- This policy will inform how RACT will advocate in the Tasmanian heavy vehicle sector through liaison with all levels of government, key transport stakeholders and the media.

### Relevance to RACT

- The cost of delivering and maintaining Tasmanian road infrastructure is high, with replacement of the road network valued at \$7 billion. Furthermore, the Tasmanian and Australian governments budgeted \$324 million on road projects and maintenance in 2019-20 (Department of State Growth, 2016 and Tasmanian Budget, 2019).
  - As a small segment of the total vehicle fleet in Australia (3%), heavy vehicles impose a disproportionate amount of this cost on the network through additional maintenance (wear and tear), as well as capital requirements (infrastructure strengthening) (Australian Government, 2018).
  - This can be attributed to the fact that heavy vehicles comprise approximately 45% of annual vehicle kilometres travelled in Tasmania (ABS, 2019)
- Furthermore, freight demand on Tasmania's major highways is expected to increase from approximately 1200 daily movements in 2019 to 1600 by 2030.
- Therefore, it is vital to maintain safe road networks, safe vehicles and safe drivers in order to ensure the safety all road users.

## Background, evidence and position

### Background

- A heavy vehicle must have a gross vehicle mass (GVM) or aggregate trailer mass of more than 4.5 tonnes. The GVM is the most it can weigh when fully loaded (National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, 2020).
- Heavy vehicles licence classes in Tasmania include multi and heavy combination vehicles, as well as light, medium and heavy rigid vehicles, which are defined by weight, length (axel number) and passenger numbers. This includes buses and coaches (Department of State Growth, 2018).
  - Combination trucks include prime movers for semi-trailers and prime movers for B-doubles and A-doubles.
- The Tasmanian Freight Survey measures heavy vehicle freight movements across Tasmania, with data used to inform planning for the state's future freight transport system. It collects data around origin and destination, commodity mass and type, trip frequency and transport mode/vehicle type (road/rail). The survey indicates that freight demand is expected to increase along Tasmania's major highways (Department of State Growth, 2017).
  - The most recent survey was in 2016-17, which recorded increases in freight transport from the 2014-15 survey.
  - Most of Tasmania's freight is carried by road, while rail transports goods from key bulk freight customers. Rail also carries intermodal freight between Burnie and Brighton.
  - The Burnie to Hobart corridor, including the Bass Highway and the Midland Highway (with the Brighton Transport Hub linking road and rail freight), carries the highest freight volumes in Tasmania. Freight will continue to increase on this route, which is on Infrastructure Australia's priority list.
  - Other key freight routes include the Bass Highway from Burnie/Devonport and the East Tamar Highway from Launceston to Bell Bay.
  - The Tasman Highway to the Hobart Airport/Cambridge is another major route, as is the Midland Highway/Evandale Road route to Launceston Airport.
- The cost of delivering and maintaining Tasmanian road infrastructure is high. The Tasmanian and Australian governments have budgeted a significant amount of funding on road projects and maintenance in 2019-20 (Department of State Growth, 2016 and Tasmanian Budget, 2019).
  - Heavy vehicles impose a disproportionate amount of this cost on the network through additional maintenance (wear and tear), as well as capital requirements (infrastructure strengthening) (Australian Government, 2018).
  - This can be attributed to the fact that heavy vehicles comprise almost half of annual vehicle kilometres travelled in Tasmania (ABS, 2019).
- According to the Tasmanian Government's 2016 Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy, the Burnie to Hobart corridor (Bass and Midland highways) remains a key focus of freight investment for the Tasmanian Government. Other routes in order of importance include:
  - The Bass Highway (west of Burnie through to Smithton, Wynyard and Marrawah) and the East Tamar Highway up to Bell Bay.
  - Tasman Highway (Hobart CBD to Hobart Airport), Frankford-Birrallee-Batman corridor, Murchison-Ridgley highways, Bridport Main Road, Esk Main Road to Fingal, Huon Highway and East Tamar Highway to Bell Bay as well as routes to the Derwent Valley and Melba.
  - Burnie, Devonport and Bell Bay port roads, Bathurst, Wellington, Lower Charles streets (Launceston), Evandale Main Road to Launceston Airport, Risdon, Main and Derwent Park roads (Glenorchy) and Davey and Macquarie streets (Hobart).

- The Burnie to Hobart Corridor Strategy also addresses a range of strategic actions surrounding investment into road and rail networks between Burnie and Hobart.
  - This includes the Bass Highway (east and west of Burnie), the Midland Highway to the Brighton transport hub, Bridgewater Bridge, as well as into Launceston (Bell Bay), Fingal and the Derwent Valley.
- The Tasmanian Government plans to Improve the safety of Tasmania's high speed Category 1 network by firstly bringing the Midland Highway up to an AusRAP 3 Star safety rating by 2025 and then providing the same level of service on the Bass Highway to Burnie by 2035 and the East Tamar Highway and Illawarra Main Road by 2045 (Department of State Growth, 2020).
  - The government will also undertake a road width and shoulder widening program by 2025 that will improve the safety of key rural roads and improve the safety of identified junctions as warranted by crash statistics.
- Heavy vehicle access route maps are divided into four vehicle classes, with routes for all vehicles either approved, conditionally approved or restricted based on vehicle type. Restricted routes require a permit (Department of State Growth and TTA, 2020).
  - Class 1: load carrying network, special purpose network.
  - Class 2: B-double network (differing for 23 and 26 metre vehicles) and higher mass limit network.
  - Class 2a: Performance Based Standards vehicle networks, including A-doubles. The 26 metre A-doubles have similar route restrictions to B-doubles, while 30 metre A-double routes have further restrictions.
    - The PBS scheme falls under the HVNL, with vehicles requiring to undergo stringent safety and performance assessments.
  - Class 3: truck and dog trailer combination network, increased mass limit network and 14.5m controlled access bus network.
  - There are also maps for agricultural and height limited routes, showing permitted and safe access routes.
- The Tasmanian Transport Association (TTA) supports regular reviews of heavy vehicle routes throughout Tasmania. These routes include road width and quality, location, vehicle size and weight limits and speed.
  - The TTA does not support the prohibition of freight vehicles from road access via curfews, or in specific areas. Their view is that rural townships are sustained by industries with reliance on heavy vehicle movement, including agriculture, aquaculture and manufacturing sectors, and prohibiting heavy vehicle access would have a significant negative impact on amenity and economy of small towns and result in increased costs for industry.
- In 2018, the Department of State Growth transferred responsibility for on-road heavy vehicle compliance and enforcement to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The NHVR independently enforces compliance of heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes to improve safety (NHVR, 2019, Department of State Growth, 2018).
  - The NVHR's safety and compliance officers deliver on-road education and compliance for drivers, operators and heavy vehicles, including vehicle standards/roadworthiness, mass and dimension limits, route compliance, driver fatigue/driving hours, noise, registration/licensing as well as investigations and prosecution of offences under Heavy Vehicle National Law.
  - State Growth will continue to escort over-size and over-mass vehicles, provide passenger transport (taxis and buses) legislation compliance, the Written-off Vehicle Register (WOVR), vehicle identity and crash inspections for the Coroner, public passenger vehicle compliance and enforcement and other vehicle compliance and enforcement with Tasmania Police.
- Freight vehicles with a GVM of more than 12 tonnes and buses with a GVM of more than 5 tonnes must not go faster than 100km/h. A-double vehicles are speed limited to 90km/h (Department of State Growth, 2018, TTA, 2020).
  - Built in speed limiters are also required for freight vehicles with a GVM of more than 15 tones, and for buses over 14.5 tonnes, built after January 1988.

- National heavy vehicle law provides heavy penalties for offences related to infringement of speed limiters.
- In addition, transport operators and NHVR officers can review vehicle speeds through monitoring data in real time or post operational checks of vehicle telematics data and calibration of speed limiters. Many fleets are set up to trigger alerts to supervisors when a vehicle speeds.
- In addition, the NHVR provides a reporting portal for operational safety issues related to heavy vehicles.
- Heavy vehicle operators are more susceptible to fatigue due to the hours and time of day they work (Department of State Growth, 2018).
  - National Fatigue Management Law dictates that operators of certain fatigue-regulated heavy vehicles must comply with certain rules, including standard hours and fatigue management. These are outlined at length for both freight vehicles and buses/coaches in the Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Handbook.
  - There is also the requirement to record work and rest hours for drivers in a log book or National Driver Work Diary depending on distances travelled.
- Heavy vehicle operators can stop to take a break at designated rest areas, petrol stations, parks, country towns and service stations as necessary (Department of State Growth, 2018).
- According to AustRoads guidelines for heavy vehicle rest areas (HVRAs), there are five classes for HVRAs. Class 1 has the highest standards, with some of the key requirements for each shown below. All HVRAs require security (AustRoads, 2019).
  - Class 1: **Must** be an hour or 70-100km apart. **Must** have 20 or more parking bays and toilets. They **should** also have tables, shelter, lighting, water and visitor information.
  - Class 2: **Must** be an hour or 70-100km apart. **Must have** 15-20 parking bays. They **should** also have toilets, tables, shelter, lighting, water and visitor information.
  - Class 3: **Must** be 30 minutes or 35-50km apart. **Must have** 10-15 parking bays. They **should** also have toilets, tables, shelter and lighting. Water and visitor information are **optional**.
  - Class 4: **Must** be 30 minutes or 35-50km apart. **Must have** 5-10 parking bays. They **should** also have toilets, tables and shelter. Lighting, water and visitor information are **optional**.
  - Class 5: **Must** be 15 minutes or 15-25km apart. **Must have** five or more parking bays. They **should** also have shelter. Tables, lighting, water and visitor information are **optional**.
- Tasmania only has Class 5 rest stops (truck parking bays), which requires stops every 15 minutes, or 15-25km (Tasmanian Transport Association, 2020).
  - However, according to the TTA, HVRAs are approximately 37km apart in Tasmania, which is outside the AustRoads guidelines and can lead to fatigue-related crashes.
- Other rest areas include commercial facilities, such as service centres and roadhouses, as well as in-town facilities (AustRoads, 2019).
  - These are considered premium rest areas as they can provide food, fuel and accommodation, as well as toilets, shelter, tables and lighting.
  - These areas must be approved by governments and transport stakeholders.
- Weigh bridges and checking stations are permanent Tasmanian facilities, located along major transport routes, where any vehicles may be stopped and inspected by NHVR inspectors to ensure they meet safety and roadworthiness standards and that drivers are complying with road transport laws (Department of State Growth, 2018).
  - Truckalysers are used by inspectors to help keep vehicles in a safe condition. The truckalyser tests brakes, steering and suspension and general wear.
- NHVR inspectors can issue two categories of defect notices, including minor, major and major – use prohibited. There are also formal warning options (Department of State Growth, 2018).

- Heavy vehicle operators must also have a blood alcohol content of zero when operating vehicles with a GVM greater than 4.5 tonnes, a bus or coach or a vehicle carrying a dangerous load, such as flammable, toxic, infectious, radioactive or corrosive substances (Department of State Growth, 2018).
- The legal noise limits vary according to GVM, manufacture date, type of engine and whether the exhaust pipe is vertical or horizontal. Heavy vehicle operators are encouraged to avoid using noisy auxiliary brakes, such as engine and exhaust or electric brakes, magnetic or hydraulic retarders, when in urban areas.
- The Department of State Growth suggests roadworthiness should be assessed through daily pre-departure checks, outlined in a checklist within the Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Handbook.
- Heavy vehicle operators across Australia, including Tasmania, are charged a motor tax. This fee, known as “pay as you go” (PAYGO), includes a road user charge to recover road impact costs and fund the NHVR (Australian Government, 2018).
  - However, PAYGO does not reflect a road user’s share of road costs and use, with no incentive for treasuries to prioritise road funding on heavy vehicle routes and no future consideration of network needs.
  - A more direct user charging system and reforms to the way governments plan, fund, invest in and deliver road infrastructure is being developed by the Australian Government as part of the Heavy Vehicle Road Reform (HVRR).
  - The structure will see heavy vehicle operators paying a charge set by an independent economic regulator, reflective of their use of the road network.
  - These fees will go into a heavy vehicle road fund, with road authorities able to directly apply this funding to roads according to heavy vehicle operator priorities and data.
  - This will allow delivery of projects that increase the life of road assets, improving operator and consumer costs through access and maintenance.
  - There is also a road user charging pilot underway between 2019-2021.
- The Tasmanian Government implemented the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework (NHVDCF) in 2017, setting out the national standards for competency and assessment of heavy vehicle drivers and the issuing of licences. Accredited Heavy Vehicle External Service Providers apply these standards in all competency assessments (Department of State Growth, 2020).
  - Under the framework, drivers must demonstrate they can perform certain skills or criteria with an accredited heavy vehicle driving assessor.
  - They must pass a rigid or combination heavy vehicle driver knowledge test prior to undertaking:
    - A competency test (certain licence requirements and for rigid vehicles only) with an approved external service provider or;
    - A final competency assessment (required for combination vehicles) with an approved external service provider.
- The Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Handbook outlines a number of key rules, regulations and behaviours operators have to abide by, including: licences, health and safety, safe driving, heavy vehicle road rules, vehicle knowledge and roadworthiness and penalties. The handbook must be understood prior to taking heavy vehicle assessments under the NHVDCF (Department of State Growth, 2018).
- Electronic stability control systems will be compulsory for new heavy vehicle trailers from July 2019 and for new heavy trucks and buses from November 2020 (Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, 2018).

## Evidence

- There are approximately 70,000 heavy vehicle licences in Tasmania, with less than 1000 of these being learner licences (Department of State Growth, 2020).

- This includes 47,500 trucks and 2500 buses. Of this, 12,200 are heavy goods vehicles and 15,600 heavy trailers.
- The Tasmanian Freight Survey from 2016-17 revealed 78% of Tasmania's land freight task was transported on 74,000km of road, with 22% on 411km of rail network (Department of State Growth).
  - A total of 25.7 million tonnes of freight travelled around Tasmania in 2016-17, with 46% coming from the North West, 32% in the North and 22% in the South. This was an increase of 8.9% from the 2014-15 survey.
  - In total, 42% of this freight was transported on the national road network. Specifically, this equated to 5.8 million tonnes between Burnie, Devonport and Illawarra Main Road at Perth, 2.3 million tonnes along the Midland Highway, 1.1 million tonnes on the East Tamar Highway, 2.3 million tonnes on the Bridgewater Bridge and 7.2 million tonnes on key urban links.
  - A total of 28% of freight was transported on state roads, with 6% on local government roads.
- The cost of delivering and maintaining Tasmanian road infrastructure is high, with replacement of the road network valued at \$7 billion. Furthermore, the Tasmanian and Australian governments budgeted \$324 million on road projects and maintenance in 2019-20 (Department of State Growth, 2016 and Tasmanian Budget, 2019).
  - As a small segment of the total vehicle fleet in Australia (3%), heavy vehicles impose a disproportionate amount of this cost on the network through maintenance and capital requirements (Australian Government, 2018).
  - This can be attributed to the fact that heavy vehicles comprise approximately 45% of annual vehicle kilometres travelled in Tasmania (ABS, 2019), despite making up just 8% of Tasmania's registered vehicles. This impacts on the road network.
- Furthermore, freight demand in Tasmania is expected to increase along major highways from approximately 1200 Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic (AADTT) in 2019 to approximately 1600 by 2030. Comparatively other roads are showing little change in AADTT over the same period (Department of State Growth, 2019).
- The economic benefits of the HVRR are estimated to range from \$6.5 to \$13.3 billion over the next 20 years. Key benefits would include: (Australian Government, 2018)
  - Economic growth, noting every 1% increase in heavy vehicle productivity, would lead to a \$1 billion increase in Australia's GDP.
  - Safeguarding Australia's \$470 billion road network, through optimised asset management and efficient investments.
- Heavy vehicles are involved in, on average, 7% of crashes that result in serious injuries or fatalities on Tasmanian roads per year (Department of State Growth, 2018).

## Position

### RACT

- Urges all levels of government to maintain adequate infrastructure to support heavy vehicles, particularly freight vehicles. This must be through increasing investment in Tasmania's key freight routes to ensure they achieve a 3-star AusRAP rating by 2030. This can be facilitated by investment into the following roads and connecting port roads:
  - The Burnie to Hobart corridor, including continued investment into the Midland Highway between Hobart (including the Brooker Highway, Bridgewater Bridge, the Brighton transport hub) and Launceston, as well as the Bass Highway through to Devonport and Burnie.
  - The Bass Highway (west of Burnie to Smithton, Wynyard and Marrawah).
  - The East Tamar Highway from Launceston to Bell Bay.



- The Tasman Highway from Hobart to the Hobart Airport and the Midland Highway/Evandale Main Road between Launceston and the Launceston Airport.
- The Frankford-Birrallee-Batman corridor, Murchison-Ridgley highways, Bridport Main Road, Esk Main Road to Fingal, the Southern Outlet and Huon/Channel highways as well as roads into the Derwent Valley (including the Lyell Highway).
- Bathurst, Wellington, Lower Charles streets (Launceston), Risdon, Main and Derwent Park roads (Glenorchy) and Davey and Macquarie streets (Hobart).
- Urges all levels of government to invest in road-rail connectors and rail infrastructure to assist in the movement of freight across Tasmania, in order to reduce heavy vehicle impact on roads and subsequent maintenance costs.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government to regularly update the Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy and Burnie to Hobart Corridor Strategy to ensure the state's key freight network can continue to safely cater for increased freight movements.
- Urges all levels of government to regularly evaluate Tasmanian heavy vehicle routes, particularly in regional areas or rural townships, to ensure their safe co-existence with other road users and to minimise traffic and road impacts. This should consider road width/quality, location, vehicle size and weight limits, as well as speed limits.
  - While RACT understands the impact of curfews and area restrictions on industry and economies, the organisation believes that, where possible, freight vehicle operators are encouraged to avoid driving in: peak travel times in urban areas, residential areas in the early morning or late night, as well as highly pedestrianised areas and small rural townships off major highways.
  - The Tasmanian Government and local government should invest in initiatives that reduce heavy vehicle traffic on Macquarie and Davey streets in Hobart as well as Wellington and Bathurst streets in Launceston during peak travel times.
  - Governments should also install heavy vehicle detours/bypasses around rural towns to reduce interaction with other road users and to mitigate traffic and road impacts.
- Urges the NHVR to regularly enforce compliance with vehicle standards (roadworthiness and weight), permitted route networks, speed limits, drink driving, fatigue/driving hours, registration/licensing and auxiliary brake use for all heavy vehicles and operators. This includes Heavy Vehicle National Law prosecutions.
  - Infringement levels must be monitored and appropriate disciplinary action must be taken should operators not comply with these standards.
  - RACT also urges the Tasmanian and Australian governments to ensure adequate resources and funding are provided to the NHVR to enforce compliance and to prosecute offences. Resourcing must also be adequately provided to the Department of State Growth and Tasmania Police for their areas of enforcement.
  - RACT urges heavy vehicle operators to adhere to the above compliance standards in order to keep themselves and other road users safe.
- Urges all levels of government to invest in increasing the number and standard of heavy vehicle rest areas along Tasmania's key freight routes. These must be 15 minutes or 15-25km apart, according to AustRoads standards. Currently, they are 37km apart.
  - This spacing is important as larger distances between rest areas can lead to fatigue related crashes.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government, local government and transport stakeholders to, consider, where appropriate, rest areas at service centres, roadhouses and in larger rural towns on freight routes. These will allow drivers to rest and obtain food, fuel and accommodation.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government to maintain all existing truck checking stations/weigh bridges and to construct new ones where required on key road freight routes, such as on the Midland Highway and on the Bass Highway.



- RACT also urges the NHVR to regularly use these stations to enforce compliance standards of heavy vehicles.
- Urges heavy vehicle operators to assess roadworthiness of their vehicle through daily pre-departure checks as outlined in the Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Handbook.
- Supports the introduction of a more stringent road user charge for heavy vehicles in line with the Australian Government's proposal through the HVRR. This charge must reflect consumption of the network by heavy vehicles, such as: location, time and distance of travel, as well as vehicle weight and environmental impact.
  - RACT also urges all levels of government to ensure this charge goes into a heavy vehicle fund that will assist in maintaining and upgrading key freight routes in Tasmania.
- Urges the Tasmanian and Australian governments to ensure that appropriate checks, education and testing are in place for the licensing of heavy vehicle drivers.
- Supports the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework pathway as a means of assessing drivers' capabilities while operating heavy vehicles prior to obtaining their licences.
  - Assessment through this pathway must be rigorous and cover defensive driving courses, safety features, speed limits, drink driving, fatigue management and co-existence with other road users.
  - This pathway must also be regularly updated as appropriate by the Australian Government and, as warranted, by the Tasmanian Government.
  - RACT also supports the educational content outlined in the Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Handbook but urges the Tasmanian Government to regularly update this as appropriate.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government and local government to develop and promote educational programs or campaigns dedicated to improving the safety of heavy vehicle operators, as well as other road users on heavy vehicle regulations and interaction in Tasmania
- Urges the Tasmanian Government and local government to conduct extensive safety audits prior to considering any heavily pedestrianised locations for freight transport.
  - RACT is concerned about the relationship between passenger vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists with heavy freight vehicles in populated areas.
- Urges the Tasmanian Government and the NHVR to ensure the Tasmanian community is properly consulted on any proposals for the introduction of new freight vehicles onto Tasmanian roads.
- Urges the Tasmanian and Australian governments to implement laws that dictate the mandatory fitting of autonomous emergency braking on new heavy vehicles and seatbelts on all new buses in Tasmania.
- Supports the mandatory fitting of electronic stability control, which incorporates anti-lock braking and traction control, on all new heavy vehicles in Tasmania.
- Urges Tasmanian heavy vehicle operators to purchase vehicles fitted with the latest crash protection and crash avoidance features as they become available.

## Scope

### Policy Application and Ownership

This policy applies to:

- Tasmanian road users
- Heavy vehicle operators, businesses and freight companies
- Metro Tasmania and other bus operators
- TasPorts
- TasRail
- Tasmanian Transport Association
- The Department of State Growth
- Local government
- TasBus
- Australian Government ministers
- Tasmanian Government ministers

The ownership and responsibility of this policy is with the RACT Board.

## Approvals

Date of approval: [insert date]

Date of review: [insert date]

Signature of CEO: [insert signature]